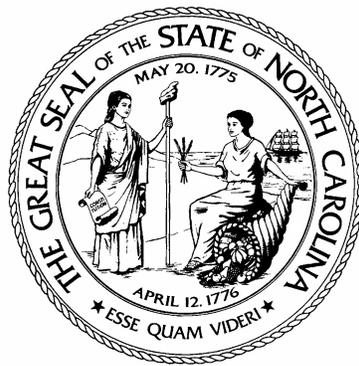


**COMMISSION ON IMPROVING  
THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  
OF MINORITY AND AT-RISK STUDENTS**



REPORT TO THE  
2001 SESSION OF THE  
2001 GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

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1999-2000**

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## COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS

### September 11-12, 2000

On the first day of this two-day meeting, Dr. Shirley Iorio, Education Policy Specialist gave an overview of the 2000 Budget Bill (HB-1840, Sections 8.28 and 11.4A), the Authorizing Legislation (1999 SL 395, Sections 15.1-15.11) and the Future Commission Activities.

Next, Dr. Bob Bridges, Chairman of the Advisory Commission on Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps, State Board of Education (SBE) Task Force, gave an update of that Commission's work. He stated that North Carolina has a 'promising' climate in which to try to close the achievement gap. The Advisory Commission's challenge is to become smart and wise about the closure of the achievement gap. The 29-member Commission will be divided into five study committees (Teacher Preparation, Underachieving Student, Role of Home and Community Environment of Student, Influence of Policy Legislation and Student Participation Exclusion). Each study committee will be asked to explore two challenging questions: What do we (the task force members) **already know** about the subject and what do we **need to know** about the subject in order to be an effective resolve? Dr. Bridges concluded by stating that "every child comes into the school with a condition for learning, but a 'preferred' condition for learning is a notable stumbling block." This Advisory Commission will report its findings to the State Board of Education, which will in turn report to this Commission.

Dr. Carolyn Cobb, Chief, Evaluation Section, Department of Public Instruction (DPI), summarized 1998-99 ABC's data of successful schools with high at-risk populations. Their success is attributed to pacing guides, effective teachers, professional development opportunities, emphasizing writing, using disaggregated data wisely, using technology wisely, implementing one-on-one tutoring, using small group programs, implementing designated school-wide reading sessions and celebrating achievement. Dr. Cobb stated, "Student and school performance are most likely to be enhanced if true systemic reform occurs. Everyone – every component of the education system – has a role to play, each supporting the other in maximizing student learning. All of these components need to be aligned and moving in the same direction."

Ms. Geraldine Blackton, a Wilson County parent, expressed her concern of the retention of approximately 600 Wilson County students as a result of the end-of-grade testing. Ms. Blackton asked the Commission to look at testing procedures in Wilson County. She also noted that Wilson County had no appeal process in place at this time and asked the Commission to review this process as well.

Dr. Elsie Leak, Director, Division of School Improvement, DPI, reported to the Commission the results of a survey to increase parental involvement in the education process. The survey focused on family resource centers across North Carolina.

Mr. Chuck Harris, Chief, Children's Services Section, Division of Social Services (DSS), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), presented an overview of the success of family resource centers statewide. DSS has implemented an Internet-based evaluation system where resource centers have to report each month to DSS the families with whom the centers are working and the progress being made based on both the families' assessment and the providers' assessment. DSS compiles this information into an evaluation report each year.

Ms. Vivian Saunders, Director, Colerain Family Resource Center and Lewiston/Woodville Resource Center, gave an overview of the Family Resource Centers of Bertie County. Some of the programs include the Brother-to-Brother and Sister-to-Sister mentoring programs and Project Challenge, a juvenile community service program.

Ms. Linda Holden-Cox, Director, Wayne Uplift Resource Association, represented two family resource centers located in public housing communities in Wayne County. One center serves students ages 6-12 and the other serves students ages 13-17. Ms. Holden-Cox showed that 78% of the students increased their academic performance in 1998-1999 and 80% increased their academic performance in 1999-2000.

Ms. Quessie Peterson, Director, Bladen Family Resource Center, represented the Bladen Family Support Initiative, which provides enrichment programs to low-income families in Bladen County. These programs include family computer classes, after school tutors, Saturday Academy tutors, family workforce training and the delivery of commodities to area families.

On the second day of the two-day meeting, Dr. Neil Pedersen, Superintendent, Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools, reported on their Minority Student Achievement Network. The purpose of the Network is to discover, develop and implement the means to ensure high academic achievement of minority students. The Network will (1) become involved in research and program development with higher education, educational organizations and foundation partners; (2) share individual staff and district successes and failures through regular communications, visitations and job-alike focus groups; (3) provide professional staff development opportunities for network districts; and (4) serve as a national clearinghouse for and disseminate information about best practices that raise the achievement of minority students

Dr. Pedersen referred to "A Report on Minority Student Achievement in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools," which a local team prepared and submitted to the local board of education. The report recognizes the school system as one of six whose African-American growth in the end-of-grade tests was more than a half a standard deviation above the state average for growth. Scores on these tests have moved from being in the 40% proficient range to the 60% proficient range. At the same time, less progress has been made on the high school end-of-course tests. Last year between 28%-54% of minority students passed the five core end-of-course tests (Algebra I, English I, Biology, US History and Economic, and Legal and Political Systems).

The local team strongly supported one of research's recommendations to have an annual publication of a minority achievement report card to show the status of measures related to student success. The report card will be issued for the entire district and separately for each school. The first report card will be published next summer. The achievement measures are to be reported both as averages for racial subgroups, as well as distributions of scores. The distributions show the public that some of the minority students do very well and allow analysis of movement of students into the upper achievement levels.

After briefly reviewing the reports presented by Dr. Pedersen, the Commission voiced concerns about subjective testing, the standard error of measurement, the recording of a student's highest test score as the official score after retesting occurs, how information is filtered down to teachers, and the validity of data from affluent communities.

Next on the agenda, Dr. Christopher Eddy, Director of Support Our Students (SOS), Department of Juvenile Justice, noted that SOS was given a budget of \$5 million to (1) reduce juvenile crime, (2) reduce the number of unsupervised youth during after school hours, (3) recruit community volunteers to mentor youth, (4) improve the coordination of existing services, (5) meet the intellectual, physical, emotional and social needs of students, and (6) improve academic performance of students participating in the programs. Dr. Eddy also noted that juvenile crime peaks between the hours of 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. SOS currently is awaiting proposals to begin expanding into every county. Sixty SOS programs currently are being trained in experiential learning as a means of developing the ability to gain instant rapport with kids and to have a repertoire of skills to focus kids on behavior modification and to help program staff compete equally with television, technology and extremism. Dr. Eddy referred to four tools of effective practice -- recreation, cultural enrichment, tutoring and skill-based learning.

Mr. Allan Jordan, Principal, Web Academy, Cumberland County Schools, gave an overview of the benefits of online course learning. Online course learning (1) gives students a choice in their education, (2) provides homebound and suspended

students an opportunity to continue their education, (3) gives students access to courses that are not available at their home school, (4) accommodates students who need a flexible schedule, (5) allows transfer students to continue their course of study, (6) provides a small class environment with almost daily interaction with the teacher, (7) provides access to new technology for real-world experiences, and (8) provides an innovative way for students to gain credits toward their high school graduation. Students outside Cumberland County cannot enroll in the Web Academy without permission of the school principal or homebound counselor.

Mr. Jordan noted the following attributes for closing the achievement gap: utilizing existing resources, accessing new technology, increasing opportunities for remote areas, neutralizing learning environments, expanding professional support, providing alternative settings, creating windows to classrooms, forming synergistic foundations and opening doors to opportunities.

Ms. Marguerite Peebles, Chief, Alternative and Safe Schools/Instructional Support Section, DPI, stated that the Section developed Guidelines for Alternative Learning Programs, adopted by the SBE and distributed to LEAs, and provides technical support to LEAs and schools. The guidelines for assigning students to an alternative learning program include (1) a description of the program and services to be provided, (2) a process of parental involvement, and (3) strategies for educating long-term suspended and expelled students. Before referring students to these programs, the school should (1) document the procedures for identifying students as being at risk of academic failure or for displaying disruptive behavior, (2) provide the reason for the referral, and (3) provide the program with relevant student records. After placement, the staff should review records from the referring school to determine recommended services and strategies. She also stressed that parents are encouraged to provide input regarding the needs of their child.

Mr. Frederick McNary, Principal, Mt. Vernon Redirection, Wake County Schools and Vice President of the North Carolina Association of Alternative Educators, stated that Mt. Vernon takes a holistic approach. Its mission is to help students come to view themselves as being capable to succeeding in school and making appropriate choices. The staff emphasizes behavior management, individualized instruction, ongoing communication with the family, counseling and coordination of efforts with community agencies. An application and referral packet, consisting of the student's report card, discipline history, attendance record, testing and other relevant information, are sent to Mt. Vernon for its review. A standing committee reviews this information with representatives from the referring school to discuss appropriateness of placement at Mt. Vernon. Upon the acceptance of students, an orientation is scheduled with the students and their parents. Mt. Vernon accepts applications from each of the district's 20 middle schools. The number of students attending Mt. Vernon increases during the school year as students are referred.

Ms. Linda Hyler Harrill, Director, North Carolina's Promise, Office of the Governor, stated that "the vision of North Carolina's Promise is to expand the number and quality of mentoring programs in the State of North Carolina so that every young person who needs and deserves a mentor is paired with a caring individual." This program is aimed at increasing the number of mentors in the state to 40,000 by the end of 2000. The goal of North Carolina's Promise is to provide all of our state's youth with the five basic promises leading to a healthy and successful life. These promises are (1) mentor – an ongoing relationship with a caring adult, parent, mentor, tutor or coach; (2) nurture – a healthy start and healthy future; (3) protect – safe places and structured activities during non-school hours; (4) prepare – a marketable skill through effective education; and (5) serve – an opportunity to give back through community service.

Ms. Arlene Wouters, Director, Communities in Schools of North Carolina (CISNC), noted that the mission of CIS is to connect needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life. Communities in Schools, part of the nation's largest stay-in-school network, was established in 1989 to assist communities in replicating the CIS process of coordinated service delivery, to support local CIS organizations across the state and to advocate for children, youth and their families. CISNC provides regional and on-site training and technical assistance, builds partnerships with state agencies and organizations to benefit young people and serves as a resource and information center for local communities concerned about youth at risk of school failure.

Dr. Oliver Johnson, Jr., Executive Director, Communities in Schools of Durham, expressed his concern that North Carolina is too "comfortable" with the discussion of closing the gap. "We need to stop talking about the gap and begin to work toward getting rid of the gap," said Dr. Johnson.

### **October 16-19, 2000: Education Summit, Adams Mark Hotel, Charlotte**

The Commission held its third meeting on October 16, 2000. Following that meeting, members attended the Education Summit, which was held on October 16-19, 2000.

The purpose of this meeting was to meet with education representatives to discuss the essential qualities, experiences and characteristics of an effective teacher, how those factors can be identified in current and prospective teachers, and to what extent those factors could be taught. The discussion focused on how these factors are related to increasing student achievement and meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

The following participated in the roundtable discussion: David Armstrong, UNC-G; Mary Lynn Calhoun, UNC-C; Zoe Locklear, UNC-P; Warren Baker, UNC-P; Charles Duke, ASU; Lelia Vickers, NCA&T; Ed Bell, WSSU; Marilyn Sheerer, ECU; Kathy Sullivan, DPI; Charles Coble, UNC General Administration; Jane Norwood, State Board of Education; Collette Love, LEAP Academy, Forsyth County; and Matty Lazo-Chadderton, NC Education and Law Project.

The following concerns were expressed:

- ❖ Teacher education programs take the heat for teachers who are not adequately prepared.
- ❖ Schools of education are not doing a good job preparing teachers to help their students develop social and cultural competence.
- ❖ Teachers are not prepared to improve intercultural communication and reduction of conflicts between students and between schools and families.
- ❖ Schools of education are not adequately preparing teachers to build bridges between the home culture and the academic culture, and to respect diverse backgrounds and languages.
- ❖ Teachers are not prepared to assist students in exhibiting confidence in their ability to master new skills and tools for learning.
- ❖ Teachers are not being held accountable for any biases and stereotypes they might hold towards students.
- ❖ Teachers are not adequately prepared to understand how cultural influences affect the way students respond to various teaching styles and methods.
- ❖ Under-qualified teachers often teach classes in high-poverty high schools.
- ❖ Under-qualified teachers often teach math and science classes with a high percentage of minority students.
- ❖ Under-qualified or uncertified teachers often teach low-income students.
- ❖ Students with highly qualified teachers generally show dramatic gains in reading and math.

The educators reported that a Deans' Council has been established to address the issues relating to effective teacher recruitment and to develop tools to assess the ability of students to be gap-closers.

The following issues were discussed pertaining to the teacher shortage and recruitment methods:

- ❖ Student teachers are not required to participate in programs that provide enough professional preparation experiences such as internships.
- ❖ Lateral entry conflicts with the increasing expectations of quality teachers coming out of schools of education (inadequate foundation).

- ❖ We need better ways to keep students in the education program while still in college rather than leaving before earning a degree in education and then entering the profession through lateral entry.
- ❖ Schools have not focused and placed resources behind these issues as has been done for areas such as technology.
- ❖ Programs should be offered to teacher assistants through whom they can earn a four-year degree if they agree to teach in North Carolina public schools for a specified period of time.
- ❖ Teachers do not have the life experiences needed to reach students who have been placed at risk.
- ❖ Teacher candidates need to take undergraduate education courses outside the university and go into area classrooms to practice theory.
- ❖ Incentives are needed to draw teacher candidates and veteran teachers into the employment of schools with a more diverse student setting.
- ❖ Funding for faculty professional development is greatly needed.
- ❖ Incentives are needed for undergraduates to spend time in public schools, thereby gaining hands-on experience and building relationships.
- ❖ Consider implementing the Houston, Texas, model of getting teachers into schools where they are needed.
- ❖ Support internships and other methods of exposure for teacher education students to experience, understand and appreciate diversity.

Following the discussion, Mrs. Robin Johnson, Commission Counsel, gave an updated report on the Hoke County portion of the Leandro litigation.

### **The Education Summit**

Following the meeting, the Commission attended the Education Summit, which convened with an evening program featuring a keynote address by Dr. Wade Nobles, Professor of Psychology and African Studies, and Director of the Center for Applied Cultural Studies and Educational Achievement at San Francisco State University. Senator Bill Martin presided over the program and spoke on the recent opinion issued in the Leandro lawsuit.

Governor Jim Hunt opened the second day of the Summit, indicating that the gap should be closed within ten years.

Dr. Wade Boykin, Co-Director of the Center for Research of the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), and Professor and Director of the Developmental Psychology Graduate Program at Howard University, focused on presenting evidence-based strategies and programs that lead to academic success and build on assets that students bring with them to the classroom.

Professor Everard Barrett, President of Professor B Enterprises, Inc., demonstrated his mathematics program with a group of Charlotte third graders who were not high achievers and who did not know multiplication tables. In about 45 minutes, they had very clearly begun to master the tables.

Ms. Shanedria Ridley, a Master Teacher for Dr. Willard Daggett's International Center for Leadership in Education, demonstrated how she uses rap, rhythm, rhyme, dance and other music and movement to motivate and excite children to excel in reading, writing, and the development and usage of grammar and vocabulary.

Dr. Barbara Sizemore, Dean Emerita of DePaul University's School of Education, noted that students make higher grades if they take harder courses. Teachers need to be taught how to teach the daily lessons and assess mastery. They must accelerate, reinforce and repeat lessons in order to become high performing schools, noted Dr. Sizemore.

Dr. Asa Hilliard, III, a Board Certified Forensic Examiner, was the keynote dinner speaker on the second day. Many of Dr. Hilliard's points were similar to those presented by Dr. Nobles, particularly regarding the importance of connecting with the spirit of the student and building on the student's cultural assets.

A Town Hall Meeting also was held on the closing day of the Summit to discuss issues relating to closing the achievement gap.

### **October 30-31, 2000**

#### *Schools That Are Succeeding at Closing the Gap*

The following elementary schools were invited to discuss why they are successfully closing the academic achievement gap. They met the following criteria:

- The percent of minority students is 1-1/2 standard deviations above the State mean for both the end-of-grade reading and math tests in Spring 2000.
- The percent of growth is 1-1/2 standard deviations above the State mean for both reading and math from 1996-2000.
- The percent of gap reduction (white and minority) is 1-1/2 standard deviations above the State mean for both reading and math from 1996-2000.
- The enrollment of minority students is above the State average (at or above 33%).
- The enrollment of students on free and reduced lunch is above the State average (above 40%).

Penderlea Elementary School (Pender Schools): Mr. John Freeman, Principal, introduced his staff and gave the following reasons as to why this school is succeeding at closing the achievement gap.

- ❖ Focus is on K-8 schools
- ❖ Student population is 575
- ❖ Average class size is 28-29 students
- ❖ Students in all grades (K-8) ride the same school bus
- ❖ Year-round school (prevents student and teacher burnout)
- ❖ Close community school
- ❖ Parents support the school administration
- ❖ Stable administration
- ❖ Low teacher turnover
- ❖ High quality central office and general office staff

Ninety percent of the white students and 83% of the minority students are proficient at Penderlea. Fifty-one of the students participate in the free/reduced lunch program.

Ms. Jennifer Anderson, Title I Teacher, noted the following programs that are making a difference: Reading Renaissance, Math Stars and SuperStars (worksheets for independent practice), Title I skills lab (computer based), reading remediation tutoring, Limited English Proficient tutoring, JumpStart preschool programs, staff development, parental involvement programs, and volunteers.

Ms. Emily Simpson, Teacher, emphasized that Penderlea teachers have high expectations, are good communicators, and are diagnostic teachers. The teachers reduce stress on their students by concentrating on the students' strengths, rather than on their weaknesses.

Mr. Ben Pittman, Parent, noted parent-teacher relationships, parent workshops on a child's course of study, and the willingness of the school to work with parents after school hours to help their children learn as reasons for this school's success at closing the achievement.

Dr. Audrey Tony, Assistant Superintendent, also noted community involvement, having a stable staff and a stable community, teamwork, family involvement and a positive learning environment as keys to their success.

Beaufort County Elementary School: Mr. Bubs Carson, Principal, focused his presentation on family, staff and curriculum. He stressed family involvement, sharing of information with staff, and student preparation as means to achieve success. He also stated that mini grants and the local business community provide the financial support needed to make this school a success. Mr. Carson concluded

by stating his concerns regarding the use of remediation funds and by praising the community for its support of the schools.

Mrs. Cherry Rouse, Third Grade Teacher and School Improvement Team Chair, emphasized the importance of test preparation and data analysis

Mrs. Diana Respass, Fifth Grade Teacher and School Improvement Team Member, stressed the importance of staff development, peer tutoring, remediation programs, at-risk writers programs, combination teaching, super Saturday programs and dedicated prayer groups.

Vinson-Bynum Elementary School (Wilson Schools): Mrs. Martha Martin, Principal, discussed the following keys to the school's success: focus on high expectations, focus on planning and assessment, focus on instruction, focus on early intervention, focus on renaissance and parent involvement, and focus on school involvement.

#### *Closing the Achievement Gap Through Collaboration*

Ms. Barbara Pellin and Mr. Haywood Homsley, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, gave an overview of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). They noted the following as the goals and objectives for CMS: improve the academic achievement of **all** students, provide a safe and orderly environment, promote community collaboration, and establish an efficient and effective support operation.

#### *Roundtable of School Social Workers and School Counselors:*

Participants in the roundtable discussion were: Ms. Pheon Beal, DHHS; Ms. Meredith Kolk, Guilford County School Social Worker; Mr. Antonio Blow, Snow Hill School Social Worker; Ms. Gloria Fanchez, School Social Worker; Mrs. Marrius Pettiford, Counselor, Wake County Schools; Ms. Melanee Mills, Counselor, Winston-Salem/Forsyth Schools; and Ms. Cheryl Novak, Counselor, Tyrrell County.

A significant part of school social work is identifying barriers to learning and working to prevent, reduce or resolve those barriers. Services are provided directly to parents and students to support the teaching and learning process. Schools impact academic achievement by providing early intervention and prevention services, supporting parental involvement and recognizing the impact of the home and community environment on learning, and collaborating with professionals and other agency staff to provide resources for families and children.

The school social workers presented the following recommendations:

- ❖ Increase the number of school social workers and school counselors to school systems based on the high number of assigned schools.

- ❖ Engage in early intervention and prevention and include public health services.
- ❖ Encourage administrators to inform school personnel regarding the duties and functions of school social workers and counselors.
- ❖ Allow the use of county sponsored cars for travel and transportation related to school social work.
- ❖ Provide cellular phones for safety of workers and more effective communication.
- ❖ Provide higher salaries for school social workers and certified counselors.
- ❖ Provide affordable conferences and staff development opportunities that are specifically designed for school social workers and counselors.
- ❖ Provide attendance officers, as opposed to school social workers, to monitor attendance concerns.
- ❖ Strengthen compulsory attendance laws – make students more accountable for violation of attendance laws.

### *Wake County Programs and Strategies That Work With At-Risk Students*

North Ridge Elementary: Ms. Candye Slay, Principal; Ms Lillie Costin, Accelerated Learning Teacher; and Ms. Robin Phillips, Guidance Counselor, presented the following demographics for their school: population of 612 students, 42% of the student population is minority (Asian/African-American/Hispanic), 50 ESL students, two self-contained special education classes, a resource program, more males than the average state or county system, less females than the average state or county system, and approximately 30% of the student population is on free/reduced lunch program.

They believe some of the reasons for the school's success with at-risk students are having a catalyst for change, meeting with the core team once a week, operating a computer lab with state-of-the-arts software programs to gather information on students (30 computers in the lab), implementing accelerated learning (students meet with teachers two hours, twice a week – satellite at St. Joseph's Catholic Church), stressing writing skills (beginning in kindergarten), and utilizing the roles of school counselors and parents. Other important factors are support of administrators, test-taking instructions throughout the school year, stressing structured phonics in grades K-2, teaching each child as if the child is academically gifted, implementing benchmarks, lowering class size, implementing character education, and establishing a Take Personal Responsibility Room as an alternative to in-home suspension.

Lockhart Elementary: Ms. Terri Cobb, Principal, noted the following attributes of the school's program for at-risk students: high expectations (everyone is accountable), English as a Second Language (ESL), Accelerated Learning Program (ALP countywide), staff development (writing, holistic scoring, math best practices, test

score interpretation, literacy), small group remediation during the school day, schedule block time for core instruction, parental involvement, and communication with staff, students and parents.

Wilburn Year-Round Elementary: Mr. Darryl Fisher, Principal; Ms. Valarie Lewis, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade ALP Teacher; and Ms. Sylvia Faulk, reviewed the school's demographics: 1% Native American, 4% Multi-Racial, 4% Asian, 16% Hispanic, 33% Black and 43% White. Mr. Fisher also observed that the staff reflected the diversity of the student population.

Mr. Fisher stated that literacy teachers are needed from the beginning of school in Kindergarten to at least the second grade. He recommended state policymakers consider providing more school counselors, focus on literacy in the early years, provide more school social workers, and support parental education.

### *Data-Driven Decision-Making*

Ms. Kathy Kennedy, Executive Director of Elementary Education and Ms. Melanie Hamblin, Principal, Long Hill Elementary, Cumberland County School System, presented on Long Hill's approach to ending the academic achievement gap.

Ms. Kennedy stated the targets for Cumberland County Schools as tutoring/mentoring; focusing on after-school remediation and the PAL program; setting high expectations; implementing Project 2000; stressing strong instructional leadership; having a common, sustained vision; having an active school improvement team; stressing focused instruction; using the school-wide approach; utilizing data disaggregation and student data analysis; and supporting community partnerships.

Ms. Hamblin a major reason for their success is the focus on students' needs. The school's goal is to help students improve their academic, physical and social skills.

### *Effective Services for Children and Families: A Systems Reform Continuum*

Ms. Dee Brewer and Ms. Priscilla Maynor, DPI, reported on "A Continuum of Services for Children and Youth at Risk of School Failure, Suspension/Expulsion from School, and Juvenile Delinquency." The vision for this continuum includes:

- ❖ Seamless system of services across schools and relevant agencies
- ❖ School-based or school-linked multipurpose centers
- ❖ Combined funding streams for common purposes
- ❖ Common training across agencies using in-house experts when appropriate
- ❖ Common definitions and entrance/exit/transition standards
- ❖ Case management involving parents

- ❖ Early and comprehensive evaluation of all children with early intervention when needed
- ❖ More support staff and mentors
- ❖ More work-based learning, application and student participation
- ❖ Collaborative accountability systems keeping youth on rolls of home schools
- ❖ Improve the image of alternative learning programs, juvenile justice and mental health facilities and grounds, and increase the pay for personnel working with severely at-risk youth

Ms. Maynor noted that the recommendations from the continuum planning committee are still in process, but forthcoming.

### **December 13-14, 2000**

The first day of this two-day meeting consisted of reports from the State Board of Education in response to legislation recommended by this Commission before the Short Session.

#### *Development of a Minority Achievement Report Card*

Mr. Lou Fabrizio, Director, Accountability Services, DPI, presented the "Report to the Commission on Improving the Academic Achievement of Minority and At-Risk Students and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the Development of a Minority Achievement Report Card."

The report includes an Executive Summary, Related Requirements (School Building Improvement Report, the ABCs, ABCs Pilot, Title I, First in America), Testing and Accountability Context, and the Design of the Minority Achievement Report Card. A sample page from *A Report Card for the ABCs of Public Education, Volume II*, is also included.

#### *Guidelines for Local Task Forces on Closing the Achievement Gap*

Dr. Elsie Leak, Director, School Improvement, DPI, gave an overview of the report entitled "Report to the Commission on Improving the Academic Achievement of Minority and At-Risk Students and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the Guidelines for Local Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap."

She reviewed the following guidelines established for forming a local task force:

- ❖ The task force be established under the auspices of the Office of the Superintendent
- ❖ Identify key stakeholders in the community who should be contacted about serving on the task force
- ❖ Consider the established criteria for task force members

- ❖ Select task force members that are representative of community demographics
- ❖ Appoint a secretary for the task force who will be responsible for recording all aspects of the meeting and distributing the minutes to the LEA public information officer for public dissemination
- ❖ Solicit a task force member to serve as chair of the group
- ❖ Convene an organizational meeting of the task force members
- ❖ Plan and schedule presentations on informative/data needed by the task force
- ❖ Set aside a specific meeting to analyze and synthesize data and information
- ❖ Define critical questions
- ❖ Decide on subcommittee/task teams to research answers to the critical questions and make assignments with timelines
- ❖ Present findings of each subcommittee to the full task force
- ❖ Decide on an implementation plan, benchmarks and a periodic monitoring process
- ❖ Develop a report to the school and community that includes the implementation plan, benchmarks and the monitoring process
- ❖ Plan for continued operation and activities of the task force

Commission members were concerned about the lack of accountability of these task forces, the lack of State-level oversight, and whether teachers would have a decision-making role. Dr. Leak replied that the Department was asked to establish guidelines to establish a local task force, not to mandate a legislative policy. She also stated that the Department would do what it could to follow-up on the procedures needed to monitor progress of local task forces, as far as accountability is concerned.

*Hotline to Collect Complaints Alleging Disparate Treatment of Minority Students and Students From Low-Income Families*

Next, Dr. Leak presented the report entitled "Report to the Commission on Improving the Academic Achievement of Minority and At-Risk Students and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the Hotline to Collect Complaints Alleging Disparate Treatment of Minority Students and Students from Low-Income Families." The report included the following:

- ❖ The proposed hotline staff will include five full-time bi-lingual employees who will work eight hours per day
- ❖ Hotline staff will log all calls, but respond expeditiously to those concerns for which information is readily available
- ❖ Review Teams will review and categorize the complaints on a monthly basis
- ❖ Review Teams will prepare reports of the individual complaints and systemic problems to be sent to the appropriate LEAs so that the LEA may also investigate

- ❖ Each LEA shall establish and publicize a contact number and the procedure it will use to receive and respond to concerns at the local level
- ❖ A summary of the documented complaints will be presented to the State Board on a quarterly basis
- ❖ Consider established criteria when conducting a fact-finding investigation that assures a fair and impartial examination of a specific problem that has statewide implications

Commission members raised questions about the confidentiality of a caller and the possible repercussions on a caller from LEAs. Members suggested the following additions to the proposal: Developing a complaint form at each school and making it available to everyone including parents; establishing teams at each school and making the principal responsible for reporting the complaints; including steps to resolve the complaints from a school to the local superintendent and Department officials.

#### *Implications of Recent NBPTS for the Education of Minority Students*

Next on the agenda, Dr. Lloyd Bond, Professor of Educational Research Methodology, Graduate School of Education, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Senior Advisor to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, gave an overview of a study entitled "Accomplished Teaching: A Validation of National Board Certification."

The purpose of this study was to determine whether National Board Certified Teachers differ from those who were not certified in terms of the quality of their classroom teaching, the quality of work produced by their students and their students' depth of understanding, and their professional activities in a variety of educational settings. The two primary study questions were:

- ❖ To what extent is the National Board's vision of accomplished practice, as laid down in its Standards documents and as substantiated in its assessments, consonant with the characteristics of teaching expertise that have emerged from the research literatures?
- ❖ Can National Board Certified teachers and their non-Board Certified counterparts be distinguished on the basis of the quality of work produced by their students and the depth of student understanding of instructional objectives?

The following dimensions were identified as consistently related to the skills and abilities of excellent teachers: use of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; problem solving; hypothesis testing; improvisation; deep and flexible representation of curricula; deep understanding of the causes of student success and failure; setting appropriate, challenging and engaging tasks and goals; optimal climates for student learning; multidimensional perception; sensitivity to context;

monitoring learning and providing feedback; respect for and commitment to students as capable learners; and passion for teaching and learning.

The scoring team for this study met the following qualifications:

- ❖ All experienced classroom teachers with an average of 17 years of teaching experience
- ❖ Over half held advanced degrees in Education
- ❖ Areas of concentration: Language Arts, Special Education, Math, Science, Media Technology
- ❖ Five Teacher of the Year Recipients, an NCCAT Teacher Scholar, a Presidential Awardee for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching
- ❖ Memberships: NSTA, NCTM, NCTE, IRA, NCARE, Council for Exceptional Children, etc.

The following scoring scale was conducted "blind" and is outlined below:

- ❖ Four point score scale from "surface" to "deep" understanding
- ❖ Scoring taxonomy based in part on Bloom's Taxonomy
- ❖ Depth of student understanding based upon scoring of semi-structured, post-observation interviews of four randomly selected students from each class, and evaluation of student work products of three randomly selected students
- ❖ Student writing samples scoring by assessment center at the University of Georgia under the direction of Professor Belita Gordon

Dr. Bond recommended that candidates for national certification "bank" portions of the test rather than trying to become nationally certified on the complete test. Banking portions at a time is less intimidating for the candidates. He also stated that an incentive in North Carolina for National Board Certified Teachers is a \$3,000 per year increase in a teacher's annual retirement benefit. Although this certification process may be intimidating, "simply going through the process makes a better teacher," said Dr. Bond.

This study was conducted with two limitations: a volunteer sample and no measure of student ability at the beginning of the school year. To review the full report on this study, visit [Aharman@NBPTS.org](mailto:Aharman@NBPTS.org).

### *Effective LEP Programs*

Dr. Fran Hoch, Chief, Second Languages, ESL, Information and Computer Skills Section, DPI, defined the National Organization of Minority Students (NOMS) as any student who speaks a language other than English at home and Limited English Proficient Students (LEPS) as those students whose first language is not English and is insufficiently proficient in English to use in educational instruction. There are at least 150 different languages in North Carolina school systems.

Dr. Hoch reviewed the following factors affecting LEP students as age, first languages, educational background, proficiency in English, family, cultural background, life experiences, etc. She stated that the federal law says the state must educate any student living in America with a parent or legal guardian regardless of a green card. Dr. Hoch stated, "Fluency on the playground does not necessarily mean proficiency in the classroom." Basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency plays a vital role in student understanding in the classroom. Dr. Hoch stressed the implementation of two-way/dual immersion (bilingual and bi-literate), which is something new to North Carolina.

Dr. Ellen Graden, Meredith College, focused her presentation on the preparation of ESL teachers. She noted the following three key elements to successful teacher preparation:

- ❖ Knowledge base for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students (knowledge of instructional and assessment strategies, attitudes about cultural differences, knowledge of second language acquisition, etc.)
- ❖ Preparation on ESL teachers
- ❖ Preparation of classroom teachers at the undergraduate level

Dr. Graden stated it might be time to consider stand-alone ESL licensure at the undergraduate level and requiring undergraduate teacher preparation programs to address issues involved in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Mr. Darryl Grubbs, Principal, Ross Hill-Magnolia Elementary, Duplin County Schools, stressed that the state should begin teaching LEP students who have not spoken English for the first five years of their lives to first learn to read and write their native language and then teach them to read and write English.

Ms. Glenda Johnson, Migrant Education and ESL Coordinator, Johnston County Schools, noted that the Johnston County School System had high expectations for all of their students. Their teachers meet students where they are and focus their attention on bringing students to their expected level of potential. LEP students are always included in any new initiative established in school. She also stressed the importance of differentiated instruction for teachers. Another focus for Johnston County Schools was to develop constructive ways in which to involve parents in helping their children have a successful school year.

Ms. Matty Lazo-Chadderton, Hispanic/Latino Parent Trainer/Education Advocate, NC Education and Law Project, noted parental involvement, language, culture, communication, economics, and immigration status as some barriers in the education of Hispanic/Latino students. These students and their parents have cultural challenges in their homes and in their school systems. "Many teachers, for

example, believe that Latino parents do not care about their children's education when in reality language limitations, for example, could be preventing parents from attending school activities – even when differences in educational traditions have been overcome,” said Ms. Chadderton. She also noted that by understanding the American public school system, Hispanic/Latino parents are better able to help their children at home.

On the second day of this two-day meeting, the Commission heard from a guest speaker, Dr. Gerald Anderson, who is the Co-Director of the Education Initiative, American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC), and Retired Superintendent, Brazosport, Texas School District. The APQC Education Initiative is a nonprofit organization with the sole focus of helping organizations improve organizational effectiveness and increase student achievement. The Initiative provides resources, training, technical assistance and continuous support.

Dr. Anderson noted the following measurements for schools that are effective in closing the academic achievement gap:

- ❖ Strong Instructional Leadership of a Principal
- ❖ Frame Vision/Mission
- ❖ Manage Curriculum Instruction
- ❖ Promote School Climate
- ❖ High Expectations and Teacher and Principal Behavior That Convey High Expectations
- ❖ A Pervasive and Broadly Understood Instructional Focus
- ❖ A Safe, Orderly Climate Conducive to Teaching and Learning
- ❖ Use of Measures of Pupil Achievements as the Basis of Program Evaluation

Dr. Anderson said that the balance between local control and state control is simply an issue of accountability; accountability standards are not negotiable. Evaluations of individual teacher expectation should, instead, be replaced with the overall campus performance in raising the expectations of students. Dr. Anderson also noted that staff development training should include five days of training consisting of: (1) the importance of effective schools research, (2) the concepts and tools of total quality management, (3) teacher expectation student achievement (TEXAS), (4) classroom management, and (5) Plan-Do-Check Act (an 8-step process of teacher/team mentoring).

Dr. Anderson noted the following means to ensure appropriate time and resources are made available at the campus level.

- ❖ Preplan (having good data in a timely manner helps)
- ❖ Do It Right the First Time and Eliminate Re-work
- ❖ Implement the 20-80 Rule, an Impact Matrix Tool (focus on top 20%, get 80% of the effect towards everything you want to achieve)
- ❖ Root Cause Analysis

- ❖ Plan-Do-Check Act
- ❖ All Components of the System Work Together for the Good of the System

Dr. Anderson stressed the importance of using quality tools in decision-making. These are the "quality tools" Dr. Anderson called opening, narrowing, and closing the achievement gap: ground rules, agenda, time management, brainstorming, nominal voting, and affinitive diagram.

In conclusion, Dr. Anderson stated, "The business of public education changes the world more than any other business in the world. What you do in North Carolina with the students in public education today determines the quality of life that will exist in this country and in North Carolina." He stressed the importance of intervention before retention. Dr. Anderson noted that an achievement gap exists between white and minority students regardless of their socio-economic status. He also stressed that we simply **MUST THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX** and begin the process of closing the achievement gap!

Mr. Marvin Pittman, Assistant to State Superintendent, DPI, gave a brief overview of Dr. Anderson's presentation. Mr. Pittman noted five themes of discussion throughout various committees and subcommittees in North Carolina. They are (1) preparation and support of teachers, (2) underachieving students and their condition for learning, (3) roles of home and community, (4) influence of legislation and policy, and (5) minority students' participation in instructional programs and their exclusion from school.

*A History of Improving North Carolina Standards and Accountability:*

Senator Martin gave this presentation for review as handout material.

*UNC - Public School Partnerships Closing the Achievement Gap*

North Carolina Middle School Achievement Project (NCMAP)

Dr. Pamela George, Chairperson, Leadership Policy and Professional Studies Department, School of Education, North Carolina Central University, summarized the NCMAP's findings on the traits of exemplary middle schools:

- ❖ Reading (emphasized in every core subject)
- ❖ Curriculum Integration
- ❖ Writing (essential in every core subject)
- ❖ Math (cumulative review and testing)
- ❖ Team Planning (joint planning periods)
- ❖ Scheduling
- ❖ Team Building (parental involvement)
- ❖ High Standards
- ❖ Public Acknowledgment of Achievement

- ❖ EOG Test Preparation (emphasized in all core subjects)
- ❖ Test-Wiseness Coaching

*Direction Instruction: An Effective Teaching Strategy for Students Who Are At Risk of School Failure -*

*Partners for Academic and Social Success*

Dr. Dorothy Singleton, Director, Office of School Services, Winston-Salem State University, reviewed the benefits of direct instruction. Direct instruction stresses teaching strategies for students who are at risk of academic failure. It offers detailed packages and training materials suitable for almost any teacher. It has proven to be successful with students of virtually any background. Direct instruction is focused on a classical education, giving real competence in reading, writing and math to enable children to soar in their educational future. Dr. Singleton noted that by emphasizing so many things besides a genuine, classical education, the educational establishment tends to sell our children short and perpetuate many of the problems they claim to be solving.

*Enhancing Learning and Improving the Behavior of At-Risk Students Through Mentoring*

Dr. Andrew Tobias, Department of Human Development Services, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, gave an overview of the University's mentoring program. The mission of the program is to provide an evolving environment that fosters intellectual, technological, scientific development and global awareness in the preparation of professionals for lifelong learning. The goals and objectives of the program are to help students:

- ❖ Recognize self as a unique, worthy person
- ❖ Develop responsible social skills
- ❖ Recognize education as a never-ending process
- ❖ Acquire life-planning skills
- ❖ Learn about the school (to include rules, consequences, etc.)
- ❖ Learn to work together in groups
- ❖ Develop a positive self-concept
- ❖ Deal with academic concerns or school problems
- ❖ Understand their physical and emotional development
- ❖ Develop communication skills
- ❖ Develop decision making skills
- ❖ Develop goal setting skills
- ❖ Explore career options related to their own interest and skills

Dr. Tobias also conducted a study entitled "A Peer Facilitator-Led Intervention with Middle School Problem-Behavior Students." This study examined the affects of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade peer facilitator intervention with 6<sup>th</sup> grade problem-behavior students. A

comparison of experimental and control groups from three middle schools indicated a significant difference between groups. The results demonstrated that peer facilitators could be a valuable resource with these students in terms of school attendance, school grades, discipline referrals and attitude toward schools.

## **January 10-11, 2001**

### *LEP Funding Report*

First on the agenda, Dr. June Atkinson, Director, Instructional Services, DPI, presented the LEP Funding Report, which primarily presents a proposal for a five-year funding of programs for limited English proficient (LEP) students. The proposal includes funding for staff development, options for the appropriation of LEP funds as a per pupil expenditure, translating State forms and other information, translators for each school system. The report also noted that there would be a review of the student accountability standards and promotion policies for LEP students after the completion of the 2000-2001 school year for grade five, and after the 2001-2002 school year for grades three and eight. The State Board recommended the establishment of a 12-member Advisory Committee on LEP Students to study data on promotion and retention of LEP students and to report findings to the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education. DPI will convene a group of personnel from local districts during the 2001-2002 school year to examine the current use of portfolios and to develop standard guidelines for LEAs.

### *Minority Under-Representation in Gifted/AP Programs*

Next on the agenda, Dr. Carolyn Cobb, Chief Evaluation, DPI, presented an interim report on the State Board's "Study of Under-Representation of Minority and At-Risk Students in Advanced Courses and Academically Gifted Programs Status Report." The study consists of several components and levels of analyses. Analysis of data on enrollments by ethnicity, gender and grade level in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses will be examined for the extent to which various ethnic groups are represented in these courses in high schools relative to their representation in the student population at large. The evaluation for this study has been contracted to UNC-Chapel Hill. Dr. William Darity, Boshamer Professor of Economics and Sociology, is lead researcher.

### *Suspensions/Expulsions of Minority Students*

Next, Dr. Cobb presented the "Report on the Study of Student Suspensions and Expulsions from 1997-97 and 1999-2000." This report first details the three-year trend data for suspensions and expulsions from 117 LEAs. The second section of this report includes those data from 69 of 75 charter schools. As required by

legislation, disaggregated data for each LEA and charter school are included in the appendices of this report.

### *Minority Over-Representation in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Programs*

Mr. Lowell Harris, Director, Exceptional Children, DPI, was next on the agenda to present the "Interim Report on the Connection Between the Identification of Minority and At-Risk Students as Students with Behavioral or Emotional Disabilities and the Gap in Student Achievement." Information available clearly indicates that students with behavioral and emotional disabilities are not performing as well as other students. There is a question as to whether the over-representation of minorities in this area of exceptionality is contributing to the academic achievement gap. In order to answer the specific questions required by the Legislature, DPI has contracted with the Center for Developmental Science at UNC-Chapel Hill. Researchers began preliminary preparations in October and early November. Outside experts will review the criteria used to identify whether a student has a behavioral or emotional disability. The study involves reviewing records of students, observing classrooms and requesting that school system personnel complete a simple survey.

### *NC Justice and Community Development Center Report*

First on the second day of this two-day meeting, Mr. Gregory Malhoit, Executive Director, North Carolina Justice and Community Development Center, presented a progress report on the efforts of the state and local school systems to address the 'deep and persistent' gap in educational achievement between minority students and white students. The report, entitled "The Achievement Gap 2001 – A Progress Report on How Minority Students Are Faring in North Carolina's Public Schools," found that despite promising initiatives, insufficient progress has been made during the past year to narrow the gap in achievement.

### *Commission Discussion of Proposed Recommendations*

The Commission spent the remainder of this second day discussing and prioritizing its recommendations for the upcoming Session. Upon conclusion of this exercise, the Commission authorized the preparation of this report and its recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

At the Commission's meeting on January 11, 2001, the Commission discussed a number of suggested recommendations. Items one and two are the two legislative proposals that contain the recommendations the Commission believes are of the highest priority for immediate implementation. Item three consists of the remaining suggestions that were discussed and which the Commission would like to see implemented to address issues of continuing concern.

### **I. ENACT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL 1, WHICH WOULD DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1) Direct State Board of Education (SBE) to include a closing the gap component in the ABC's formula. Teachers and principals will get their bonus only if the achievement gap closes.
- 2) Direct the SBE to adopt a policy for local school systems (LEAs) to establish local task forces on closing the gap.
- 3) Require LEAs to identify students in all grades who are at risk for academic failure and implement a personal education plan for academic improvement with focused intervention and performance benchmarks. Focused intervention and acceleration activities may include summer school, Saturday school, and extended days. LEAs shall provide these activities, and transportation, free of charge to students.
- 4) Direct LEAs to adopt policies requiring principals, when making student promotion decisions, to consider, in addition to end-of-grade and end-of-course tests, factors such as classroom work, grades, quality of instruction received, and a student's best educational interests. Direct superintendents to ensure that principals abide by these policies.
- 5) As part of its curriculum review, the SBE shall examine the standard course of study to determine where and how culturally diverse objectives and activities can be included.
- 6) Require LEAs to employ teachers or instructional support personnel for schools with a substantial population of students, as determined by the State Board of Education, who speak a language other than English. These personnel must be able to speak the native language of these students.
- 7) Reauthorize the Commission as a permanent commission with a specific responsibility of determining the extent to which additional fiscal resources are needed to close the academic achievement gap and keep it closed.
- 8) Direct the education subcommittees of the appropriations committees of the General Assembly to examine State funds for education and identify funds that

could be redirected for personnel and activities designed to close the achievement gap.

- 9) Direct the SBE to collect data on suspensions, expulsions and alternative placements in a disaggregated manner, and make that data readily assessable to the public.
- 10) Appropriate \$57 million each fiscal year of the 2001-2003 biennium to provide resources and programs needed to assist students in meeting the State's student accountability standards.
- 11) Appropriate \$10 million each fiscal year of the 2001-2003 biennium for limited English proficient students.

**II. ENACT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL # 2, WHICH WOULD DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO IMPLEMENT A HOTLINE TO COLLECT COMPLAINTS ALLEGING DISPARATE TREATMENT OF MINORITY STUDENTS AND STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES.**

**III. SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS**

**ABCs/Student Accountability Standards/Testing Issues**

- 1) End the secrecy surrounding tests. If a student may be held back in the same grade because of scores on a standardized test, parents should have the right to review their student's graded exam. Other states already use this common sense procedure.
- 2) Allow parents to bring neighbors or other support with them to any appeal process. When a parent's child receives a low score on a test and faces summer school or retention, that parent has the right to appeal.
- 3) Improve fairness in testing conditions. Students with visual impairments and certain reading disorders should be read the tests so that they have a fair chance. Similarly, Spanish-speaking students should be allowed to take math tests in Spanish—so that their score will actually reflect mastery of mathematics—while all reading tests can continue to be given in English.
- 4) Include student attendance, not just dropouts, in the formulas for rewarding schools under the ABC's program.
- 5) Establish for superintendents performance criteria that exceed those set by local boards of education.

## **Addressing Instructional Needs**

- 1) The SBE, in consultation with The University of North Carolina (UNC), should develop and implement – or contract with the Web Academy or some other provider of online instruction – a program that will allow students who are eligible to participate in Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses to take those courses online and receive high school, and where appropriate, college level credits for those courses. Two of the primary purposes would be:
  - a) As public schools intensify efforts to close the academic achievement gap, those students who are ready to engage in more rigorous study than might otherwise be available solely from the students' school site may do so; and
  - b) To provide options for schools to exercise additional options for increasing academic achievement levels under the ABCs program where they have a high proportion of students who are already achieving at levels III and IV. Particular attention should be directed toward inclusion of minority students and students from low-income families in those programs and courses. Disaggregated data should be collected and reported with regard to students participating in those programs and courses. The State Board of Education should report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Legislative Commission on Improving the Academic Achievement of Minority and At-Risk Students its plan of implementation, effective January 1, 2002, along with the proposed budget for implementation.
- 2) Split At-Risk/Alternative Schools funding allotment into two designated funds. Specify that a certain percentage of At-Risk funds go to schools to improve student achievement of minority and at-risk students.
- 3) Enforce school-based management without compromising State requirements.
- 4) As students who are at risk for failing are also those who are suspended/expelled from school (and therefore education is not available for the child's improvement), the General Assembly should appropriate additional dollars for LEA's to create, with community involvement, alternative school environments for these children (mostly African American males). These alternative environments must be academically grounded with a focus on raising the achievement of these students.

## **Limited English Proficient Students**

- 1) Define the following items regarding the English as a Second Language (ESL) program established at the various county school systems in relation to the State obligation to provide all students with the opportunity for a sound basic education:

- a) A mandatory basic curriculum, including a minimum teaching time per year within the program, to ensure that Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students are receiving the appropriate and sufficient English proficiency and academic preparation to be fully prepared to take the State tests once the student is not eligible for exemption (currently two years). In defining these basic and minimum requirements, close attention should be given to average academic performance and testing results of LEP students nationwide.
  - b) Minimum intervention and remediation strategies, including minimum number of hours for both strategies/activities, to ensure that LEP students receive the appropriate and sufficient academic preparation to be able to take and pass end-of-grade and end-of course tests.
- 2) The State Board of Education should study a variety of alternative school programs for LEP students, such as Dual Language, to determine their effectiveness, and their success in preparing LEP students to fully participate in their classroom. The SBE should encourage the creation of a number of pilot sites to measure the effectiveness of such alternative school programs in educating not only LEP students but also different demographic groups.

### **Teacher Preparation & Support**

- 1) The SBE should engage in discussions with UNC to develop teaching certification programs tailored for teacher assistants with a significant number of years of experience within any school system in the State. The discussions should determine the funding needed to implement these programs in an effort to increase the number of teachers available for the reduction of class sizes.
- 2) The SBE should develop a plan and proposed budget for "gap-closing" teams to assist teachers and administrators in local school units become competent in utilizing appropriate content, strategies and methodologies.
- 3) Foster development of a task force comprised at least of representatives of the Council of Deans of Education, teachers and administrators in local school systems, the SBE, teachers who have completed the Teaching Fellows program, curriculum planners, researchers and practitioners of "closing the gap" practices. The purpose would be to develop a "system" of activities and objectives that produce success at closing the gap and keeping it closed.
- 4) The SBE should engage in discussions with UNC to encourage the universities to develop undergraduate programs in education with emphasis in teaching English as a Second Language (or English Language Learners).
- 5) Provide funds to increase the number of school social workers, counselors and other support personnel.

- 6) Develop a strategic plan of alliance among higher education, the State Board of Education, and LEAs to ensure alignment between what is taught in university schools of education and what is needed for the academic success of all students in the public schools.
- 7) UNC schools of education should require courses in diversity awareness and students with disabilities.

### **Continued Work of Commission**

The Commission, as part of its continued work, should:

- 1) Make site visits to schools that are succeeding in closing the gap.
- 2) Determine whether a different funding formula is necessary for schools heavily impacted by low-performing students. Study the degree of equity in resource allocations between NC schools that are heavily impacted with minority or at-risk students and schools where there are more highly motivated students.
- 3) Hear from members of local boards of education in order to learn what the SBE is doing to impede progress on closing the gap.
- 4) Study the role of school-based decision making committees in schools heavily impacted by minority or at-risk students. As part of this study, the Commission may examine the process for selection of members on these committees.
- 5) Evaluate procedures and policies used by central office administrators to insure equity among schools.
- 6) Develop a best practices formula for schools that are heavily impacted by minority or at-risk students.
- 7) Jointly with the Department of Public Instruction, invite Dr. Gerald Anderson to present. Invite local superintendents.

**AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION**  
1999 S.L. 395, SECTIONS 15.1 – 15.11

PART XV.-----COMMISSION ON IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF MINORITY AND AT-RISK STUDENTS (S.B. 943 - Martin of Guilford; S.B. 762 - CARTER; H.B. 1116 - WRIGHT; H.B. 536 - MOORE)

Section 15.1.(a) The Commission on Improving the Academic Achievement of Minority and At-Risk Students is created. The Commission shall consist of 22 members as follows:

- 1) Five senators and three public members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;
- 2) Five representatives and three public members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- 3) Six public members appointed by the Governor, who represent groups or individuals with knowledge and experience in advocating, educating, or assisting minority and at-risk students to achieve, at least one of whom is a representative of a statewide nonprofit education advocacy organization that advocates on behalf of minority and at-risk students and at least one of whom is a representative of a statewide organization that represents the interests of African-Americans.

In making appointments to the Commission, the appointing officers shall ensure that African-American members have significant representation on the Commission.

Section 15.1. (b) Initial appointments to the Commission shall be made before September 15, 1999. The first meeting of the Commission shall be held no later than October 15, 1999.

Section 15.2. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall designate one senator as cochair and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one representative as cochair.

Section 15.3. The Commission shall be authorized to:

- 1) Gather accurate and reliable data and research information pertaining to the status of minority and at-risk students in the North Carolina public education system;
- 2) Identify and visit education programs and other efforts within and outside North Carolina that appear to be successful in yielding significant positive results for minority and at-risk students;
- 3) Consult with higher education faculty members and other persons who have been engaged in extensive research and observation related to these issues and encourage their direct involvement in the activities of the Commission;
- 4) Conduct hearings throughout the State for the purpose of obtaining meaningful information regarding successful education programs and efforts related to those concerns;

- 5) Identify, consult, and meet with representatives of national, regional, and State-level organizations and agencies that could be particularly helpful in addressing these concerns;
- 6) Devise recommendations as to steps that should be taken to address these concerns -- steps to be taken separately and collectively by:
  - a) State government agencies;
  - b) Local government agencies;
  - c) Public schools and higher education institutions;
  - d) Nonprofit organizations, including community-based organizations, with particular emphasis on those with direct ties to families of these children and youth;
  - e) Foundations;
  - f) Religious institutes;
  - g) Civic organizations;
  - h) Business and industry; and
  - i) Other entities.
  - j) Determine the extent and categories of fiscal and human resources needed to address the identified concerns.
- 7) High school graduation standards, including adequacy of course requirements and related issues.

Section 15.4. In the study, particular emphasis should be placed on programs and efforts that have been successful in imparting:

- 1) Improved educational achievement;
- 2) Reduction of school discipline and behavioral problems;
- 3) Reduction of minority and at-risk student dropout rates; and
- 4) Improved relations between parents, schools, and students.

Section 15.5. The Commission shall make an interim report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly not later than the convening of the 2000 Regular Session of the 1999 General Assembly. The Commission shall submit to the General Assembly a final report of its findings and recommendations of this study not later than the convening of the 2001 General Assembly. Upon filing its final report, the Commission shall terminate.

Section 15.6. The Commission, while in the discharge of official duties, may exercise all the powers provided under the provisions of G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.1 through G.S. 120-19.4. The Commission may meet in the Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building.

Section 15.7. Members of the Commission shall receive subsistence and travel expenses at the rates set forth in G.S. 120-3.1.

Section 15.8. The Commission may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services as provided by G.S. 120-32.02. The Legislative Administrative Officer shall assign professional staff to assist in the work of the Commission. The House of Representatives' and the Senate's Supervisors of Clerks shall assign clerical staff to the Commission, upon the direction of the Legislative Services Commission. The expenses relating to the employees shall be borne by the Commission.

Section 15.9. When a vacancy occurs in the membership of the Commission, the vacancy shall be filled by the same appointing officer who made the initial appointment.

Section 15.10. All State departments and agencies and local governments and their subdivisions shall furnish the Commission with information in their possession or available to them.

Section 15.11. The Legislative Services Commission shall allocate funds available to the General Assembly to implement the provisions in this Part.

**FUTURE COMMISSION ACTIVITIES  
AS RECOMMENDED IN COMMISSION'S  
1999 INTERIM REPORT**

In order to derive experiential and research based approaches to achieving substantial and lasting success in improving the academic status of minority and at-risk students, the Commission shall:

- 1) Consult with national experts, visit successful programs, and identify and engage North Carolina researchers in closing the gap. The national experts are those who are researching the achievement gap and other relevant issues and who are implementing approaches at closing the gap.
- 2) Review work of the following persons and entities, consult with them and, where appropriate, conduct site visits:
  - a) Ronald F. Ferguson, Harvard economist who is studying the achievement gap.
  - b) Edmund W. Gordon, Yale professor who is chairing the College Board's task force on the relatively small number of minorities at the upper achievement levels (there was a recently released report).
  - c) Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, professor of Urban Education at Emory
  - d) U. S. Department of Defense Schools
  - e) The Beacon Schools model
  - f) Montgomery County, MD schools
- 3) Review literature, including the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation report, "Afterschool Makes the Grade".
- 4) Identify and review tools used for evaluating academic, social and behavioral at-risk status for children and families. Examine whether they are culturally and racially sensitive.
- 5) Examine how family resource centers in North Carolina, both school-based and community-based, are functioning, and the extent to which they are capable of helping at-risk students and their families significantly increase academic, behavioral and social success, and in creating an atmosphere of learning. Determine the extent to which they can be replicated.
- 6) Examine programs and activities designed to increase bonding between non-custodial parents and their children who are at-risk, and examine their success and the extent to which they can be replicated.

- 7) Identify positive and negative community or environmental factors that influence at-risk status. Examine what can and should be done to counter the negative factors and to encourage the positive factors.
- 8) Examine how the talents and skills of school support personnel, such as school social workers, can most effectively be utilized in North Carolina's efforts to assure academic and social success for minority and at-risk students.
- 9) Confer with students on how they can be assisted in dealing with peer pressures and environmental factors that negatively influence academic and behavioral success. Examine what research reveals.
- 10) Examine the extent, nature, desirability, and adverse affects of tracking in North Carolina schools. Determine the extent to which it is desirable, and how to address the adverse impacts.
- 11) Examine the level of minority participation in challenging high school academic curricula, such as Advanced Placement courses, three or more years of English, math beyond Algebra 2, two or more years of laboratory sciences, foreign languages and history.
- 12) Examine, encourage, and recommend funding for programs designed to enhance the learning environment for children by focusing, where appropriate, on parenting skills, early childhood development knowledge, and literacy skills for parents and families of low-achieving students who have siblings below the fifth grade.
- 13) Confer with Deans of Schools of Education, LEA recruiters, Mentor Teachers, the NC Teaching Fellows Program, researchers and others, on ways to increase the number of qualified teachers who possess needed racial, cultural, and economic sensitivity, and who are prepared to provide effective and high-quality education experiences for diverse student populations. Examine ways to attract these teachers to schools with high concentrations of minority and low family income students, and schools that are low-performing.
- 14) Review categories for disaggregation of data based on race; being cognizant of the diversity within commonly used categories. Determine whether modifications are needed in order to get an accurate perspective on academic achievement of various student populations.
- 15) Conduct round-table discussions and forums in various LEAs that have been successful in closing the gap and in increasing overall achievement. Examine how they use funds, other resources, and programs to address the issue. Examine what they are planning for the future, what barriers they still face, what

parents and community residents think of the efforts, the extent to which the efforts are replicable, how they employ goal setting and the process they use in working toward those goals. Examine the extent to which they collaborate with other agencies and organizations, and the way they define academic and behavioral success and how they reinforce it. Examine their instructional and administrative leadership strategies, and their methods of partnering with parents.

- 16) Engage in discussions with the five ABC's pilot sites designed to measure how effectively schools are educating students of different demographic groups [Bladen, Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Craven, Elizabeth City/Pasquotank, and Winston-Salem/Forsyth].
- 17) Engage in discussions with charter school representatives regarding what works in their experiences that can be replicated. Examine things they believe cannot be replicated in other settings, and why not.
- 18) Monitor and engage in discussions with alternative school programs to determine how they function, their goals, the level of program effectiveness, their success in getting students back into regular school settings, and other related issues.
- 19) Widely disseminate the results of the Commission's work to education agencies and other governmental agencies, to organizations that have an education focus, and to the general public.
- 20) Continue discussion regarding implementation of SBE student accountability standards. Make recommendation to 2001 Session of General Assembly as to whether the policy needs to be postponed or revised based on an analysis of most recent of test data and other relevant information.
- 21) Evaluate ABCs formula in light of ABC's pilot program to determine whether incentives and sanctions should be revised to reflect progress in academic performance of minority students and students from low-income families. Consider whether the current incentives should be reduced to any school that fails to achieve a minimum achievement level for each category of students.
- 22) Determine what data is currently collected from programs and activities designed to close the achievement gap, whether through education agencies, human services agencies or government funded private nonprofit agencies, and the extent to which the data may be utilized in longitudinal analyses.